

20 February 1976

STATINTL

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, ISAS

FROM:

SUBJECT: Executive Order Requirement for "a Vigorous Program to Downgrade and Declassify Foreign Intelligence Information"

Presently there are two active declassification programs in the Agency. The DDA/Information & Privacy Staff reviews classified documents for release to the public upon request (FOI, PA or EO 11652). According to the Executive Order (11652), we need only review documents which are ten years old or older, but the Agency's policy is to review all documents requested for release regardless of age. The other declassification program is run by the DDO and involves OSS and CIA predecessor agency documents. This program has expanded since its origination several years ago and now has authorization for 15 retired annuitants to work three days per week on declassification. Because this is a part-time operation progress has been slow and current completion estimates are in terms of several years for predecessor agency documents alone. We have not begun to look at CIA classified documents.

To fulfill the requirements of the new Executive Order we can consider several options. Any program is a mammoth task and should not be undertaken until the moratorium on destruction is lifted and the file purge completed. Otherwise people will waste time reviewing, downgrading and declassifying documents which should and would be destroyed once the ban is lifted.

STATINTL

1. Ask every officer to spend a percentage of time reviewing documents in his own files for downgrading and/or declassification. Teams would have to visit or recall documents for review.
2. Require records officers to review documents for declassification. But, records officers are not the people to do this review. Only case officers or others familiar with the files can make knowledgeable judgments.

2.

SUBJECT: Executive Order Requirement for "a Vigorous Program to Downgrade and Declassify Foreign Intelligence Information"

3. Establish a Declassification Review Staff at the appropriate level with expertise from each directorate to review documents. With sufficient resources they could begin reviewing documents presently in the Archives & Records Center and then function as a conduit for review in accessioning material to the Center. It's a big proposition. This group could be the third staff under the Assistant for Information.

If the Sources & Methods regulation is approved, I think the volume of classified documents produced will drop drastically so that in the long run, any declassification staff or declassification review requirement might not be such an immense task.

eml